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News Release



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DEQ Activities For Sept. 11

- Ambient air monitor at Kenner is up and running. We are getting air samples from the New Orleans area.
- EPA's mobile air sampling vehicle, known as TAGA, will be taking samples in Lafourche Parish today.
- There are 25 major wastewater treatment plants in the impacted area. Of these plants, which handle more than 1 million gallons a day, 16 are working. Three more are expected to be working soon.
- Most of DEQ's assessment, response, and recovery work have begun because search and rescue activities have tailed off and access improved.
- EPA Region 6 Administrator Richard Greene joined Secretary McDaniel in an aerial flyover of the New Orleans area yesterday to inspect existing environmental conditions.
- DEQ and EPA has begun taking samples in the Mississippi River where Orleans, Jefferson parishes receive their drinking water.
- Kenner's wastewater treatment plant is now functional.
- DEQ and the Environmental Protection Agency are taking samples in Lake Pontchartrain where flood water from New Orleans is being pumped. These samples will be compared with DEQ's historical data to document the lake's recovery.
- The first samples from EPA and DEQ's sampling efforts in the flooded area have returned from the lab. These results are available at <http://www.epa.gov/katrina/testresults>.
- DEQ expects some fish kills as debris and bacteria are pumped into Lake Pontchartrain because the newly introduced compounds will degrade and use up oxygen the fish need to survive.
- DEQ sent an administrative order to 17 railway operations in an attempt to gather information on railcars in the impacted area. The department is trying to find out where the railcars are located, what is in them and what their current condition is.
- The overwhelming effort to pump water out of the flooded areas continues. There are 41 of 174 permanent pumps operating (12,642 CFS) and 38 temporary pumps (734 CFS). We expect to see an increase in temporary pumps in the next 24 hours.
- DEQ has established and is housing a Unified Command Center where DEQ staff and representatives from EPA, USCG, NOAA, TCEQ, LOSCO, and Mayor Nagin's office are coordinating emergency response and hazard assessment activities.
- We are currently housing about 25 emergency response personnel for EPA Region 6 and a 19-member "strike team" provided by The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to assist our emergency response activities.

- DEQ has had staff working around the clock manning our desk at EOC since before Katrina came ashore.
- Boats and crews were assigned to assist in search and rescue. Our crews rescued almost 500 individuals.
- DEQ personnel are surveying the storm impact area, particularly industrial facilities, from planes, boats and the ground to identify potential threats to public safety and the environment.
- Ground-based teams from DEQ have been surveying the North Shore areas for environmental hazards and status of waste treatment facilities. When there was a need, DEQ personnel delivered humanitarian assistance (water, ice, MREs) where needed.
- DEQ is working to establish air quality monitoring at strategic locations in the New Orleans area. The Kenner monitor is expected to be working and taking air samples by Sept. 12. EPA has two air-monitoring vans taking samples throughout the impacted area.
- DEQ staff and State Police visited the major industrial facilities in the New Orleans area on Sept. 5 by helicopter to assess their status. Of the 15 sites visited, only ConocoPhillips in Belle Chasse, propane, and Murphy Oil in Mereaux, oil, reported any leaks.
- There are a number of assets conducting aerial reconnaissance and photography including the EPA ASPECT aircraft, HAWK helicopter mounted remote sensing, and additional helicopters provided by EPA. The ASPECT aircraft has remote monitoring capabilities including radiation detectors, air sampling equipment, sophisticated digital aerial photography and GPS capabilities. The HAWK system is capable of remote sensing of gas leaks and hydrocarbon releases.
- DOE will be assisting with a flyover of the affected area using highly sensitive radiation detectors to pinpoint and document locations of radiation sources.
- DEQ is also responding to reports provided by other emergency responders and the public. The telephone number to report environmental hazards to DEQ is (225) 342-1234. A toll-free number for reporting is also available (888) 763-5424.
- We have prepared our laboratory assets for rapid turnaround environmental sample analyses.
- DEQ has issued an emergency declaration providing regulatory relief for emergency response and cleanup activities. It is being updated and regularly posted to DEQ's web site.
- DEQ requested and EPA has granted a fuel waiver providing flexibility for fuel use.
- We are coordinating with the Regional Response Team, LOSCO, and the Coast Guard on coastal oil spill issues.
- We are coordinating with the Corps of Engineers on debris and solid waste cleanup and disposal issues. Seventeen sites have recently been OK'd to burn hurricane-related debris such as trees and tree limbs.
- We are coordinating with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission concerning the restart of Waterford III nuclear plant and working with NRC, Homeland Security, and DOE on issues related to sources of radiation.
- DEQ GIS resources are assisting with aerial images, maps and georeferencing of areas of concern. Aerial images and data are being shared with our emergency response partners.
- DEQ is working with EPA to contact various railroad companies for information on contents and status of railcars in the impacted area.
- DEQ is engaged in extensive strategic planning for environmental hazard assessment, response, recovery and impact assessments.